

Message Text

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ACTION ARA-10

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-02

INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15

USIA-06 OMB-01 /070 W

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R 201920Z JAN 76

FM AMEMBASSY BUENOS AIRES

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 4194

INFO AMEMBASSY LONDON

C O N F I D E N T I A L BUENOS AIRES 0376

E. O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, AR, UK

SUBJECT: DECISION TO WITHDRAW BRITISH AMB NOT CLEARED WITH MRS. PERON

REF: BUENOS AIRES 0217

1. BRITISH AMB ASHE DEPARTED FOR LONDON LAST NIGHT (JAN. 19). ACCORD-
ING TO BRITISH EMBOFFS, HE HAD AT FIRST THOUGHT TO DEPART END OF
LAST WEEK BUT WHEN ASSURED BY FOREIGN MINISTRY THAT POSTPONEMENT
UNTIL THIS WEEK--OR EVEN LATER--WOULD NOT FURTHER COMPLICATE
BILATERAL RELATIONS, HE DELAYED UNTIL YESTERDAY. HUMORISTS
HAVE POINTED OUT THAT ASHE THUS LASTED LONGER AT HIS POST THAN
DID FONMIN ARAUZ CASTEX, WHO HAD ORDERED AMB OUT OF THE COUNTRY
AND WHO WAS REPLACED AS FONMIN JAN 15.

2. DESPITE SOME PRESS SPECULATION ON THE SUBJECT, WE DO NOT
BELIEVE OUSTER OF FONMIN WAS DIRECTLY RELATED TO HIS HANDLING
OF MALVINAS ISSUE. HE WAS FIRED BECAUSE HE WAS POLITICAL ALLY
OF INTERIOR MIN ROBLEDO, AND WAS APPOINTED BY SEN LUDER. BUT
WHETHER OR NOT IT WAS AN ISSUE IN HIS DEFENESTRATION, THERE IS
EVIDENCE THAT MRS. PERON WAS NOT ALTOGETHER IN CONCERT
WITH ARAUZ CASTEX'S HANDLING OF THE SITUATION. BUENOS
AIRES HERALD STORY OVER THE WEEKEND INDICATED ARAUZ
CASTEX HAD DEMANDED WITHDRAWAL OF AMB ASHE WITHOUT
CLEARING WITH MRS. PERON. THIS WAS CONFIRMED IN PRIVATE
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CONVERSATION WITH POL COUNS TODAY BY ARAUZ CASTEX'S

EX-STAFF AIDE. ACCORDING TO HIM, FOREIGN MIN TOOK DECISION ON HIS OWN AND DID NOT INFORM MRS. PERON'S PRIVATE SECRETARY, JULIO GONZALEZ, OF HIS ACTION UNTIL FON MINISTRY COMMUNIQUE HAD ALREADY BEEN ISSUED. AIDE INDICATED THAT PRIVATE SECRETARY AT FIRST CONGRATULATED FONMIN FOR HIS ACTION, THEN CALLED BACK TO EXPRESS MRS. PERON'S GREAT CONCERN OVER CONSEQUENCES OF THE ACTION, BUT THE NEXT DAY, WHEN IT CLEAR THAT PUBLIC OPINION VERY MUCH BEHIND THE FON MINISTER, CALLED A THIRD TIME TO SAY MEASURE HAD MRS. PERON'S APPROVAL. SUBSTANTIATING EVIDENCE TO THIS VERSION IS SEEN IN FACT THAT PRESIDENTIAL PRESS SECRETARY OSVALDO JORGE PAPALEO AT FIRST ORDERED GOVT-CONTROLLED MEDIA NOT TO USE COMMUNIQUE ISSUED BY FON MINISTRY ON JAN 13, AND IT WAS NOT UNTIL FOLLOWING DAY THAT PAPALEO WITHDREW ORIGINAL PROHIBITION. ACCORDING TO BUENOS AIRES HERALD, PAPALEO APOLOGIZED TO PRESS DIRECTOR AT FON MINISTRY, EXPLAINING THAT HIS EARLIER PROHIBITION HAD RESULTED FROM A "MISUNDERSTANDING."

3. EVEN THOUGH MRS. PERON MAY HAVE BEEN UNHAPPY WITH FONMIN'S HANDLING OF THE MATTER, IT IS MOST UNLIKELY THAT HER PIQUE STEMMED FROM ANY BASIC DISAGREEMENT WITH THE HARD LINE TAKEN. ON THE CONTRARY, MORE LIKELY THAT SHE WAS DISPLEASED BECAUSE THE MATTER HAD NOT BEEN CLEARED WITH HER FIRST, AND, EVEN MORE IMPORTANTLY, BECAUSE MORE ATTENTION THAN WAS TO HER LIKING WAS THUS FOCUSED ON THE FONMIN AT A TIME WHEN SHE WAS ALREADY CONSIDERING CABINET CHANGES.

4. BRITISH SHOULD NOT HAVE BEEN OVERLY SURPRISED BY ARGENTINE REACTION. ARGENTINA HAS CONSISTENTLY PROTESTED JMG'S FAILURE TO LIVE UP TO UN RESOLUTION CALLING FOR NEGOTIATIONS BETWEEN INTERESTED PARTIES OVER THE MALVINAS ISSUE. FURTHER, DESPITE ARAUZ CASTEX-CALLAGHAN TALKS IN PARIS AND SUBSEQUENT TALKS WITH AMB ASHE HERE WITH VIEW TO ADDING ARGENTINE MEMBERS TO SHACKLETON MISSION, GOA HAS CONSISTENTLY TAKEN PUBLIC POSITION THAT MISSION WOULD BE VIOLATION OF ARGENTINE SOVEREIGNTY. EVEN SO, FONMIN SOURCES TELL US THAT GOA PROBABLY COULD HAVE ACCEPTED BRITISH REFUSAL TO NAME ARGENTINA AS COMMISSION CONFIDENTIAL

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DEPUTY. FOREIGN SEC CALLAGHAN'S REFERENCE IN NOTE OF JAN 12 TO SOVEREIGNTY ISSUE AS "STERILE", HOWEVER, WAS VIEWED BY ARGENTINA AS UNNECESSARY PROVOCATION, REQUIRING STRONG RESPONSE ON THEIR PART.
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